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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1683
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000039

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA DEC 28; AND JAN 4,
11, AND 18: EASTERN PROVINCE, MECCA, AND MEDINA

Classified By: Acting Consul General CB Toney for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: In the Eastern Province on January 18, Sheikh al-Munajjid at the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque focused his sermon on the importance of personal health as well as the obligations of Muslims during Ashura. (BEGIN NOTE: The Shia and Sunni celebrate Ashura in different ways for different reasons: the former commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala while the latter fast because they believe it is the same day on which the Prophet Muhammad fasted. END NOTE.)

¶2. (U) In Mecca on December 28, Sheikh Salih Al Talib called on Muslims to thank God for the opportunity to perform pilgrimage. On January 4 Sheikh Al Talib spoke about the "Pillars of Islam" (i.e. statement of faith, daily prayers, charity, fasting during Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca) and on January 11 Sheikh Sa'ud Ibrahim al-Shuraym discussed the importance of good "social relations." Sheikh Usama Khayyat on January 18 preached against the "vanities of life." In Medina on December 28 Sheikh Ali Bin-Abd-al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi focused on the "foundations of faith" while on January 11 Sheikh Salah al-Budayr encouraged Muslims to learn from those who have passed away. Sheikh al-Hudhayfi's January 18 sermon reiterated the December 28 Medina sermon and January 4 Mecca sermon. END SUMMARY.

EASTERN PROVINCE

PRAISED GOOD HEALTH; CONDEMNED STEROID-USE; ENCOURAGED
FASTING AND PRAYER DURING ASHURA

¶3. (C) In the Eastern Province at the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque on January 18, Sheikh al-Munajjid started the sermon by discussing the importance of personal health and warned against, in particular, the use of steroids. He then reiterated his sermon of January 4 in which he sought to educate his congregation on the duties of Muslims during Ashura. He encouraged fasting as well as praying more than the obligatory 5 times a day.

MECCA AND MEDINA

THANKED GOD FOR PILGRIMAGE; REVIEWED "PILLARS OF ISLAM";
ENCOURAGED "SOCIAL RELATIONS"

¶4. (U) In Mecca at the Holy Mosque on December 28, Sheikh al-Hudhayfi urged Muslims to continue thanking God for being able to perform pilgrimage. He added that Muslims are rewarded for circulating and spreading the pilgrimage rituals. He continued, stating that "Peace is the greeting of Islam.... The slogan of unity, the headline of amity...." Sheikh Al Talib on January 4 discussed the "Pillars of Islam" and the importance of adhering to Islam's teachings. On January 11 Sheikh al-Shuraym focused on fostering good "social relations" and stated that "People should associate with one another, even if...some people harm others." He argued that it is better to have patience with those who harm, than to not associate with anyone at all. The following week on January 18 Sheikh Khayyat called on Muslims to avoid the "vanities of life" that can distract from their pursuit of worship.

EXPLAINED "FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH"; URGED MUSLIMS TO LEARN FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES

¶5. (U) In Medina at the Holy Mosque on December 28 Sheikh al-Hudhayfi explained the "foundations of faith," citing belief in "Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers." Sheikh al-Budayr on January 11 discussed Muhammad's travel from Mecca to Medina and urged Muslims "To prepare for death before it is too late...and learn lessons from those who (have) departed." Similar to the December 28 Medina and January 4 Mecca sermons, Sheikh al-Hudayfi on January 18 highlighted the importance of strengthening one's faith by the Koran and the Sunna (i.e. the practice and examples of the Prophet Muhammad's life).

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